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MAYRAH, THE WIND OF SPRING

Why does spring come? Here's an old Australian story about why spring comes. Mayrah is the spring wind, and Yhi is the sun.

Mayrah, the Wind That Blows the Winter Away

When winter begins, the iguanas hide in their homes in the sand. The black eagle hawks go into their nests.

The lizards hide themselves in little logs. The iguanas dig a long way into the sand. They cover up the tunnel behind them as they go. They all stay in their winter homes until Mayrah blows the winter away.

First, Mayrah blows up a thunderstorm. When the iguanas hear the thunder, they know the spring will come soon. So they begin making a tunnel to go out again.

But they do not leave their winter home until the butcher birds sing. Then the iguanas know that Mayrah has really blown the winter away. So they open their eyes and come out on the green earth again.

Now Mayrah blows softly. The flowers open one by one. The bees come out to gather honey. Every bird wears his happiest feathers and sings his sweetest song.

Then Yhi the sun chases Mayrah away. Yhi makes it hot. The flowers droop and the birds sing only in the early morning. Yhi rules until the storms are over and have cooled him. Then winter takes his place.

But he will be blown away again by Mayrah. Everyone loves Mayrah.

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Exercise A: Detail Check

1. What is Mayrah?

2. What is Yhi?

3. How do the iguanas hide in the sand?

4. What is the first thing Mayrah does when she comes?

5. How does Mayrah blow as the flowers open?

6. Why does Mayrah have to leave?

7. Is it hot or cold when Yhi rules?

8. What do the bees do when they come out?

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Exercise B: Word Search

Find each word and cross it out. Words can be up and down or back and forth.

A	O	E	S	P	R	I	N	G	J
P	Y	F	G	C	R	L	S	N	W
G	B	I	R	D	X	B	M	W	I
Q	J	K	X	K	B	M	W	V	N
P	Y	F	I	G	U	A	N	A	T
F	L	O	W	E	R	S	G	F	E
F	B	G	M	C	W	R	V	S	R
G	F	M	A	Y	R	A	H	D	H
K	Q	X	B	H	P	G	Y	C	F
W	H	T	G	I	T	W	I	N	D

MAYRAH	BIRD	SPRING	WIND
YHI	IGUANA	WINTER	FLOWERS

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Exercise C: Deeper Meanings

1. What is Mayrah like?

2. What is Yhi like?

3. How can you tell the birds like spring?

4. Why do the flowers droop when Yhi rules?

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Exercise D: Go Outside and Look

It's easy to think of myths just as stories. But sometimes myths show how much the storyteller knows about nature.

1. How can you tell that the storyteller knows about nature? Give some examples from the story.

2. Now it's your turn. When spring comes to where you live, what happens? Think of a few animals you can go outside and watch now that spring is coming. Go outside and watch.

What do these animals do when spring comes?

What do the wind and sun do when spring comes?

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Exercise E: Your Own Myth

Did you like watching animals? You learned facts about what they do when spring comes.

*Now, let's have a different kind of fun. Tell a **story** what the animals do when the spring comes.*

But don't forget your facts. Myths are best when they "explain" things that really happen in nature. If a squirrel hides nuts, why does he hide them? Did he have a fight with a greedy dog? Is he a miser?

Now write your own myth about the coming of spring.

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Exercise F: Draw

1. Draw the iguanas digging in the sand.

2. Draw the birds singing. Make sure they're in their happiest feathers.

3. Draw Mayrah opening up the flowers.

4. Draw part of your own spring wind myth.

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Mayrah, the Wind of Spring Answer Key:

Exercise A

1. the wind that blows the winter away
2. the sun
3. The iguanas dig a long way into the sand.
4. blow up a thunderstorm
5. she blows softly
6. Yhi chases her back.
7. hot
8. gather honey

Exercise B

.	.	.	S	P	R	I	N	G	.
.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	W
.	B	I	R	D	.	.	.	.	I
.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	N
.	.	.	I	G	U	A	N	A	T
F	L	O	W	E	R	S	.	.	E
.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	R
.	.	M	A	Y	R	A	H	.	.
.	.	.	.	H	.	.	.	.	.
.	.	.	I	.	W	I	N	D	.

Exercise C

1. Gentle; she blows softly. But she's also strong; she blows up a thunderstorm.
2. Fierce; he rules the world and chases Mayrah away.
3. Each bird wears its happiest feathers and sings its sweetest song.
4. Because it's so hot.

Exercise D and E

Answers vary.

Exercise F

Pictures should vary.

A Note on the Text:

The text is a revised excerpt from *Australian Legendary Tales—Folk-lore of the Noongahburrahs as Told To the Piccaninnies* by K. Langloh Parker, which was first published in the late 1800s. This translation is provided courtesy of Project Gutenberg (www.gutenberg.org).